



Symptoms of Caregiver Fatigue

What is Caregiver Fatigue?

Caregiver fatigue, also referred to as caregiver stress, can be defined as physical and emotional exhaustion as a result of caring for a person with significant psychological or physical demands. As a military caregiver, it is possible that you may experience varying levels of caregiver fatigue. It is necessary to identify the symptoms so you can address them and avoid long-term, detrimental effects to you and your service member.

Common Symptoms¹

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty sleeping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignoring responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily irritated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased alcohol or food consumption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building feelings of resentment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglecting self-care or needed leisure time

Many caregivers will have the tendency to “power through” and ignore these symptoms, feeling as though they are being selfish or their needs are not as important as those of their service member. This thought process is not only inaccurate but will only have continued harmful side effects.

Impact

If left untreated, caregiver fatigue can lead to burnout. Once a caregiver has reached the state of burnout, caregiving is no longer a healthy option for the caregiver or the care recipient. Taking steps to address caregiver fatigue will help to avoid having to find other caregiver options for your service member, which may lead to more stress, uncertainty, perceived feelings of failure, and potentially inadequate care.

What should you do?

The first step is recognizing that these feelings and signs may be related to your role as a caregiver and the daily stress or burden you are facing. Some helpful strategies include:



- Talking to someone, such as a family member, a friend, or a counselor
- Establishing a community for support
- Asking for help
- Getting organized, such as tracking daily activities and maintaining a schedule
- Looking after your own well-being
 - Get needed sleep
 - Make time for physical activity
 - Eat healthy
 - Maintain regular checkups with your doctors
 - Enjoy leisure time pursuits

Resources

For more information, visit the [NMCPHC Caregiver Guide to Battling Burnout](#).

References

1. Caregiver Stress and Burnout.
http://www.helpguide.org/elder/caregiver_stress_burnout.htm. Accessed 30 Jun 2014.